

form, even into the age of lusty capitalism under

Elizabeth and James I.⁸⁴

That ecclesiastical authorities had much opportunity

of enforcing the canon law in connection with money-

lending is improbable. It was naturally in the com-

mercial towns that cases of the kind most frequently

arose, and the towns did not look with favour on the

interference of churchmen in matters of business. In

London, collisions between the courts of the Official,

the Mayor, and the King, were frequent in the early

thirteenth century. Men took proceedings before the

first, it seems, when a speedy decision was desired, or

when their case was of a kind which secular courts were

not likely to regard with favour. Thus craftsmen, to give

one curious example out of many, were evidently using

the courts Christian as a means of giving effect to trade

union regulations, which were more likely to be punished

than enforced by the mayor and aldermen, by the

simple device of imposing an oath and proceeding

against those who broke it for breach of faith. The

smiths, for instance, made a " confederacy/" supported

by an oath, with the object, as they declared, of putting

down night-work, but, as was alleged in court, of

preventing any but members of their organization from

working at the trade, and summoned blacklegs before

the ecclesiastical courts. The spurriers forbade anyone

to work between sunset and sunrise, and
haled an
offending journeyman before the
archdeacon, with the
result that " the said Richard, after being
three times
warned by the Official, had been expelled
from the
Church and excommunicated, until he would
swear to
keep the ordinance*"8*

Even at a later period the glimpses
which we catch
of the activities of the ecclesiastical
jurisdiction are
enough to show that it was not wholly a
dead letter.
Priests accused of usury undergo
correction at the
hands of their bishops.** Petitioners appeal
for redress
to the Court of Chancery on the ground
that they